

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 PC-01 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /078 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2861

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 7134

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINS, KS

SUBJECT: PRISONER RELEASE ANNOUNCED FOR AUGUST 15

REF: SEOUL 7070 (DTG 110756Z AUG 78)

1. ROKG AUGUST 14 ANNOUNCED RELEASE OF PRISONERS TO MARK 30TH ANNIVERSARY

OF INDEPENDENCE AUGUST 15. LIST CONTAINED 22 EM VIOLATORS.

AMONG THOSE FREED WERE: REV. YI HAE-HAK, A CLERGYMAN CONVICTED IN A CASE PARALLELING THE MYONGDONG INCIDENT; EM-4 VIOLATORS -

YI HYUN-PAE, YU IN-TAE, AND KIM HYO-SUN; TWO FORMER HANKUK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY STUDENTS INCLUDING KIM HA-POM, SON OF KNCC SEC GEN KIM KWAN-SUK; ONE FORMER REPORTER; ONE MEMBER OF THE DUP; AND SNU GRADUATE PAK CHONG-YOL, SON OF REF. PAK HYONG-KYU, A CHURCHMAN ACTIVE IN THE DISSIDENT COMMUNITY. SOME ON LIST COULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED AS OF THIS WRITING BY THE KNCC HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND ARE PRESUMED TO BE STUDENTS OR PERHAPS WORKERS.

2. MANY OBSERVERS IN OPPOSITION AND DISSIDENT COMMUNITIES

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EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH LIST. NDP PROMPTLY ISSUED STATEMENT COMPLAINING THAT LIST WAS "TOO SMALL." KNCC SOURCES TOLD EMBOFF THAT THEY WERE DISAPPOINTED WITH SMALL NUMBER RELEASED AND PUZZLED AS TO YARDSTICK ROKG HAD USED IN PREPARING LIST. FOR EXAMPLE THEY POINTED OUT THAT WHILE RELEASE OF EM-4 VIOLATORS WAS WELCOME, THEY WONDERED WHY ROKG HAD NOT SET FREE YI KANG-CHOL, THE ONLY REMAINING

PRISONER THEY KNOW OF IN THIS CLASS THUS CLOSING BOOK ON THIS CATEGORY ONCE AND FOR ALL. THEY WONDERED WHY ONLY TWO SEMINARIANS HAD BEEN RELEASED.

3. YI KYUNG-PAE, SEC GEN OF KNCC HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED LIST WITH KCIA REPRESENTATIVE ON MORNING OF AUGUST 14 AND THAT KCIA REPRESENTATIVE HAD SAID THAT ONE IRON CLAD RULE WAS THAT THOSE WHO DID NOT SIGN STATEMENTS COULD NOT BE RELEASED. KCIA REP ADDED THAT ROKG PLANNED TO CONTINUE REGULAR RELEASES AND SAID ROKG HAD ONCE AGAIN INVITED A NUMBER OF FAMILIES OF RECALCITRANT PRISONERS TO GO TO JAILS TO CONVINCE THEIR IMPRISONED RELATIVES TO SIGN STATEMENTS FOR RELEASES WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE FUTURE. YI SAID HE BELIEVED KNCC WOULD ISSUE STATEMENT IN NEXT DAY OR TWO ATTACKING ROKG LIST AS INSUFFICIENT.

4. COMMENT: ROKG GOES FORWARD AT VERY CAUTIOUS PACE IN RELEASE OF EM PRISONERS, BUT AUGUST 15 LIST, LIKE LIST OF MAY 14, IS NOT LARGE ENOUGH IN SIZE OR SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH IN TERMS OF PRESTIGE OF PRISONERS FREED TO GIVE DISSIDENTS THE SENSE THAT ROKG FINALLY CONVINCED IT MUST IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. IF LIST HAD ANY PATTERN AT ALL, IT SEEMED AIMED AT SATISFYING ROKG PERCEIVED PRIORITIES OF KNCC WHICH HAD MADE MUCH OF EM-4 DETAINEES, REV. YI HAE-HAK, IMPRISONED SEMINARIANS, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND PRESUMED ANXIETY OF REVS. KIM AND PAK TO SEE THEIR SONS FREE. HOWEVER, KNCC IS NOT INTERESTED ONLY IN THOSE PRISONERS MOST CLOSELY RELATED TO CHURCH AND WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR RELEASE OF ALL PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE. PARADOXICALLY, WITH THEIR OWN SONS FREED, REVS. KIM AND PAK MAY BE PUT IN POSITION OF FIGHTING HARDER FOR OTHER PRISONERS AND THEIR ABILITY TO MODERATE TONE OF DISSIDENT DEMANDS ON ROKG MAY BE LESSENERED BY FAMILIES WHO MAY SUSPECT THE CLERGYMEN OF HAVING RECEIVED SPECIAL FAVOR FROM THE ROKG. GLEYSTEN

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